

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, May 9th, 2012

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Sibyl James**

Today's poet is **Paul Hunter**

Paul Hunter lives in Seattle, where he has worked as a teacher, and for the past 18 years has published letterpress books and broadsides under the imprint of Wood Works. His farming poems have been reviewed in the New York Times, and have received the Washington State Book Award. He has been a featured poet on The NewsHour. His most recent book is prose, One Seed To Another: The New Small Farming, published by The Small Farmer's Journal, and he has a new book of farming poems appearing in mid-May, titled Stubble Field.

E Pluribus Unum

by Paul Hunter

To carry through mountains
like a secret weapon we took it apart
so it could not be prevented or planned against

for the surprise for the impact
though we never thought of it as a weapon
this apparatus so practical so complete

dismantled to carry on
a piece at a time through emergencies
in bundles in packs in the pocket

we all watched this work of dismemberment
so it would be upon all of us
though some more than others each bore part

all along there have been side-effects
hidden pieces that wore on each other
becoming difficult meanings odd fits

now after the distance the hardships
it must come together to work or be discarded
a burden an accusation worse than useless

no one here knows how it all went
if we even have all of it
brought to this one place to work with

because of the distance the hardships
we no longer have all of us
though each stopping passed what he carried

so perhaps missing parts
amid farflung now backwards ideas
of returning each piece where it went

we stay up in shifts by the fire
squint through smoke to turn things
this way and that to catch flickering lights

out of bad dreams wake one another
to try various fits at the trash heap
anything not to abandon the one thought

End.